

What do you think?

Point of View by Jim Eadie

I have just received Daryl Kramp MP most recent communication with his constituents entitled: What Do You Think? This one follows the usual format of presenting a flattering view of the Conservative governments action, in this case on immigration, the temporary workers program and jobs. He then asks constituents: 'Who is on the right track to help ensure Canada's immigration system benefits Canadians?'

I queried him about asking who is on the right track while only presenting his point of view in the mail out material. 'Will this result in useful feedback information for you from all of the people in the riding,' I asked. 'In terms of useful survey feedback for you, is this a good practice?'

He explained to me that he was elected as a Conservative representative from this riding and in addition belongs to the party that forms the government, and from that point of view he reports to his constituents. He also noted that his mail-out surveys were never intended to be scientific, but do in fact generate a lot of comment and feedback for him to consider: positive, negative, and constructive.

Fair ball. In an arena where it seems many people remain fairly uninformed or uninterested in the big issues that affect them, for many reasons, somehow creating a dialogue is good. Kramp assured me he is a good listener, and he wants to know what people think.

Then the survey went on to ask the constituent to 'describe yourself' by checking one or more boxes, and to 'check all that apply'. In our household, 2 of the three of us did not fit into any of the boxes offered: (Stay at home parent, Senior, Veteran, Parent of Child under 18 or Working Canadian). I worry that a person with disabilities, or someone who is unemployed or homeless might feel excluded without a box for their situation, or without a 'Fill in your own description' box. (Thankfully 'Other' was not suggested) In response, Kramp told me that knowing a bit about the respondent is important, as it provides him with 'a clearer snapshot' of things.

'For example,' he said, 'Youth. The cost of their education. I represent all people in my riding, but I want to know what is important to the youth'

I double-checked the survey again, and unfortunately a box for 'Youth' is not provided.

Therein lies the danger of asking people to describe themselves using words that you supply. Would the 'snapshot' will be unnecessarily blurred, or maybe not even get taken?

I do commend Kramp for his ongoing efforts to connect and communicate with the people in his riding.

But these surveys ??

That's what I think.